DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 460 SP 030 910

AUTHOR	Katz, Malcolm
TITLE	Georgia Superintendents Identify Their Most Troublesome Administrative Problems: A 1988 Survey.
SPONS AGENCY	Georgia Educational Leadership Academy.
PUB DATE	Nov 88
NOTE	27p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrative Problems; Administrator Attitudes; Change Strategies; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Development; Needs Assessment; *Personnel Evaluation; *Program Evaluation; *Superintendents; Teacher Motivation; Teacher Supervision
IDENTIFIERS	*Georgia

ABSTRACT

Supervisors in Georgia's schools, having assessed their most critical administrative needs through earlier surveys, identified their districts' most troublesome specific problem areas associated with those critical needs. For each critical need, rankings of seven problem areas were determined. Tables in this report display survey responses on each of these areas of need accompanied by commentary on the three highest-ranked problems. Of the 10 most often cited problems among the 70 of the survey, 5 related to working with teachers to improve instruction. Five others related to developing the climate and organization of the schools and school districts. These are compared with the 10 problems least often identified as "most troublesome." All 70 problem areas of the survey are ranked from most to least often as identified by the 73 percent of Georgia's superintendents who responded to the survey. The three highest ranked problem areas were: (1) supervision, evaluation of staff; (2) instructional supervision; and (3) evaluating program effectiveness, implementing changes. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED303460

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Georgia Superintendents Identify Their Most Troublesome Administrative Problems: A 1988 Survey

Prepared for
The Georgia Educational Leadership Academy
Dr. Jimmy Puckett, Director

by

Malcolm Katz, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Leadership & Research
Georgia Southern College
November, 1988

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Katz
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP030910

Georgia Superintendents Identify Their Most Troublesome Administrative Problems: A 1988 Survey

Prepared for
The Georgia Educational Leadership Academy
Dr. Jimmy Puckett, Director

by

Malcolm Katz, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Educational Leadership & Research
Georgia Southern College
November, 1988

Background to Study

If one can imagine a scenario in which he meets at one time the entire body of Georgia's school superintendents, and says to their spokesman, "Look, I know which administrative needs you ranked highest in 1987, but I'd like to know the specific problems that trouble you right now *about* each of those needs", the report that follows are the "answers" he or she would hear.

Prior to this 1988 survey of Georgia's school superintendents, a three-year series of surveys had been conducted to find out their assessment of administrative needs in their own school districts. The Georgia Educational Leadership Academy sponsored the 1986 and 1987 surveys, and disseminated the results widely throughout Georgia. Much interest was evidenced by superintendents and others, and more to the point of the studies, the Academy was provided with information that helped it to determine priorities for staff development programs for school leaders in Georgia.

One of the striking outcomes of that 3-year series of studies was the remarkable stability in the way superintendents ranked these needs. Year after year, substantially, the same needs were ranked as being among the highest ten, or most critical, as shown in Table A below.

Table A

The Ten Highest Ranked Administrative Needs of Local School Systems, Ranked by Superintendents in 1985, 1986, 1987, of 61 Administrative Needs[1]

Rank			Need
1985	1986	1987	
1	1	1	Supervision, evaluation of staff
2	2	2	Instructional supervision
3	3	3	Evaluating program effectiveness; implementing changes
4	4	6	Knowledge of curriculum/instruction
5	4	4	Principal's role (in management of instruction)
6	6	5	Staff morale, group dynamics
7	9	10	School-parent communication
8	7	7	Knowledge/use of leadership techniques
9	11	12	School-community communication
10	14	8	Long,short term planning
15	8	9	Interpersonal relations, rapport
16	10	22	School climate, learning environment

[1]Katz, M. The Administrative Needs of Georgia's 186 Local School Systems: A 1987 Survey of Superintendents. Georgia Educational Leadership Academy, November 1987, pp. 25, 26.

As Table A shows, these men and women, individually faced with assigning needs ratings for their *own districts* to each of 61 different items within 6 categories of administration,[2] made such consistent responses that a list of only *twelve needs* is required to cover *all* of their highest ten ranked needs during those three years. (Table A) Moreover, survey data broken out by geographic region showed also a high degree of consistency, not only from year to year, but from region to region within Georgia.[3]

The New Study

As rewarding and useful as were these results, many questions remained unanswered. As Georgia's superintendents rated these needs, we could not know what unstated observations they were making, or what specific connections to problems in their own districts they were concerned about as they rated this item as a "High Need", that one as a "Low Need", or at mid-points between ? For example, as they rated "Supervision, evaluation of staff" as the highest among 61 needs, was their main problem their concern about new statewide evaluation forms, was it their difficulty in resolving problems with marginal staff members, or was it an entirely different kind of concern?

This 1988 study was designed to answer this question: which of several possible problem areas associated with each of the ten highest ranked administrative needs of school systems as ranked by superintendents in 1987 do superintendents most often identify as most troublesome?

The problem areas were identified as follows: from a great many of possible problem areas that might be associated with each need, lists were narrowed by the author to seven likely problem areas (later also called "descriptors") for each need.[4] In May of 1988, each of Georgia's 186 local school superintendents was asked to review a set of seven descriptors (problem areas) for each of the needs that were the ten highest for 1987, and to select three of those seven that they "think are the most troublesome in your school system at this time," that is, to select three problem areas for each of those ten highest-ranked needs. Each superintendent was also given the option to write in a problem area if it was of concern to him or her but did not appear among the set of seven descriptors for each administrative need.[5]

[2]These categories were: Organization and Administration; Management of Students; Communications Management and Public Relations; Management of Facilities, Services, Finance; Management of Instruction; and Personnel Management

[3]op.cit., pp. 30,31

[4]These lists were generated and culled with the assistance of graduate students under the direction of the author. Some two-thirds of these students were practicing educational leaders; approximately one-third were experienced staff members preparing for their initial state certification in educational leadership.

[5]Four write-in comments only were received.

Of the 186 superintendents in Georgia, 135 responded for a usable response rate of 72.6 per cent.

In summary, as a follow-up to earlier surveys, a statewide study was undertaken to discover the kinds of problems local school superintendents were experiencing with each of the ten administrative needs they had previously ranked as their ten most critical in 1987.

The Problem Areas Most Often Identified

The descriptors for each need are shown in descending order, from the one which was most often identified as troublesome, to the one responded to least often by the superintendents.

Table I

The Administrative Need Ranked #1:

"Supervision, Evaluation of Staff"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	SUPERVISION, EVALUATION OF STAFF		
1	Need additional skills in dealing with improvement of marginal staff members (teachers, principals, etc.).	100	74.1
2	Need training an practice in using mandated evaluation forms.	96	71.1
2	Need training in conferencing, observation skills and formulation of improve ments or growth plans for staff.	96	71.1
4	Developing yearly goals and work plans for various staff positions.	49	36.3
5	Need to develop and learn uses of a management team for supervision.	27	20.0
6	Developing a comprehensive and on-going orientation program for new teachers/administrators.	20	14.8
7	Planning for use of teachers and/or administrators in peer supervision.	16	11.9

The descriptor most often identified by superintendents under this need was "Need additional skills in dealing with improvements in marginal staff members (teachers, principals, etc.)" Almost three of each four superintendents (74.1% of all respondents) checked this as among "the most troublesome."

The two descriptors that follow closely in frequency of responses are "Need additional training and practice in using mandated evaluation forms", and "Need training in conferencing skills, observation skills, and formulation of improvement or growth plans for staff." Just under three-fourths (71.1%) of all superintendents identified those as among the most troublesome items associated with this administrative need, "Supervision, evaluation of staff." These three problem areas were well ahead of the other four descriptors offered by the survey in terms of frequency of response.

Comment

Dealing with marginal teachers (and other staff), those whose performance is below district-level standards, those who either show promise of the needed improvement or who may be considered for dismissal (or non-renewal) is the top concern of superintendents when they consider the administrative need, "Supervision, evaluation of staff." Learning how to use the long-awaited state evaluation form ranks next (tied with #3) in importance, no surprise, as it is central to several critical administrative tasks, and third, acquiring or getting better at the basic administrative skills in staff evaluation necessary to fulfill the steps described in the state-required process.

These three problem areas could comprise a coherent package of content for a staff development program for school leaders.

Table II

The Administrative Need Ranked #2:

"Instructional Supervision"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION		
1	Focusing supervision upon the teaching-learning situation rather than upon the teacher.	91	67.4
2	Need for administrators to improve skills in prioritizing instructional needs.	80	59.3
3	Need knowledge and approaches to organizing staff development to improve instruction.	77	57.0
4	Need to develop plan for a utilization of the total staff in instructional supervisory behavior.	63	46.7
5	Making more effective use of newer methods, newer media, and new departures in instruction.	44	32.6
6	Need information on classroom management.	33	24.4
7	Need more training in special education instruction.	13	9.6

The descriptor most often checked by superintendents was "Focusing supervision upon the teaching-learning situation rather than upon the teacher." More than two out of three (67.4 per cent) of all respondents checked this problem as one of the most troublesome. The next most frequently selected problem area associated with "Instructional Supervision" was "Need for administrators to improve skills in prioritizing instructional needs", with 59.3 per cent of respondents selecting this descriptor. The third problem area selected was "Need knowledge and approaches to organizing staff development to improve instruction", with 57.0 per cent responding positively to this descriptor as troublesome.

These three problem areas were well ahead of the other four that were offered by the survey. A distant last, selected by fewer than one in ten superintendents (9.6 per cent) was "Need more training in special education."

Comment

It appears that superintendents view supervision as insufficiently centered on the events of the classroom, and too often focused on personal factors associated with the teacher. Perhaps another implication is that superintendents feel that principals need to become more skilled at

analyzing teacher behavior in the classroom and its impact on learners, and less reliant on teacher traits as a basis for evaluation. The second concern, that of prioritizing instructional needs, implies that superintendents see their school district's instructional efforts as lacking in focus or direction and perhaps see a need for mapping out a plan and a strategy for improving instruction, rather than responding to short-term or even day-to-day instructional problems.

Their concern with using staff development to improve instruction could be reflective of the newer statewide initiative in staff development. This is not surprising, as we know that superintendents have shown increasing concern from 1985 to 1987 with the need for improvement in in-service education.[6]

Table III

The Administrative Need Ranked #3:

"Evaluating Program Effectiveness; Implementing Changes"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	EVALUATING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS, IMPLEMENTING CHANGES		
1	Need for additional training in needs analysis, developing clearly defined goals, and methods for achieving these goals.	80	59.3
2	Need defined criteria for use in identifying school effectiveness and/or program effectiveness.	75	55.6
3	Need assistance in developing skills to manage change; i.e. diminished productivity, heightened anxiety, dissent, etc.	70	51.9
4	Increasing staff awareness of goals and their commitment to achieving these goals.	59	43.7
5	Need to correlate curriculum guides, textbooks, and learning materials when implementing change.	49	36.3
6	Need to know how to develop and manage an adequate information system to determine the effectiveness of a program.	43	31.9
7	Need to evaluate change to determine the success of the change.	24	17.8

[6]Katz, M. op. cit. 27

For this administrative need, the descriptor responded to most often was "Need for additional training in needs analysis, developing clearly defined goals, and methods for achieving these goals." Virtually six of each ten superintendents (59.3%) identified this as among the troublesome problems within districts.

Following closely, with just over half of all superintendents checking this item was "Need defined criteria for use in identifying school effectiveness and for program effectiveness." Third in frequency of response was "Need assistance in developing skills to manage change; i.e. diminished productivity, heightened anxiety, dissent, etc."

Comment

Goal-setting, achieving effectiveness, and leading staff over the bumps of change are the subjects of the four most often selected of these problems. Alligning curricula to change is not as difficult a problem as these, and somewhat surprisingly, evaluating change is rated as the least troublesome of the seven descriptors.

Table IV

The Administrative Need Ranked #4:

"Principal's Role (in Management of Instruction)"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	PRINCIPAL'S ROLE (IN MANAGEMENT OF INSTRUCTION)		
1	How to establish a climate for staff participation in planning instructional improvement.	68	50.4
2	Need to know and recognize several approaches to learning and techniques for motivating pupils.	65	48.2
3	Defining the principal's role as instructional leader.	64	47.4
3	Need additional knowledge on how to balance the need for coordinating instruction while still allowing for appropriate individual freedom of teachers in classroom instruction.	64	47.4
5	Need additional training in strategies for managing instruction.	52	38.5
6	How to coordinate the instructional program across grade levels and content areas.	51	37.8
7	Need system for assessing instructional needs.	33	24.4

Four problem areas were identified often by superintendents for this need, each one reacted positively to by about half of all respondents. This is a more even response to the descriptors that was associated with most of the other needs, in which superintendents more clearly identified one or two descriptors as most troublesome. Of these four problem areas, the most frequently checked was "How to establish a climate for staff participation in planning instructional improvement," with 50.4 per cent identifying this descriptor. Next most frequently checked was "Need to know and recognize several approaches to learning and techniques for motivating pupils (48.2 per cent). Third, with 47.4 per cent positive response was "Defining the principal's role as instructional leader."

Comment

Superintendents want greater involvement by staff in the change process and a wider spectrum of teaching strategies in the classroom. We infer from an almost 50 per cent response, that shifting the principal's role further in the direction of instructional leadership is an important issue for superintendents. Finally among these top four problems, superintendents show concern about the potential loss of the freedom to teach that often accompanies greater emphasis on coordination (47.4 per cent).

Table V

The Administrative Need Ranked #5: "Staff Morale, Group Dynamics"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	STAFF MORALE, GROUP DYNAMICS		
1	How to foster faculty collegiality.	81	60.0
2	Need methods of identifying opportunities to utilize a wider range of staff in decision-making.	70	51.9
3	Need to know how to provide opportunities for staff members to engage in professional/personal.	69	51.1
4	Need improvement in various ways of providing feed back to staff.	65	48.2
5	Be able to identify characteristics of and to respond appropriately to burnout in staff members.	51	37.8
6	Need workshops in the management of small groups; i.e. discussion, disagreement, task allocation, consensus.	50	37.0
7	Need training in Quality Circle approach to problem solving.	16	11.9

"How to foster faculty collegiality" was the highest ranked of the seven descriptors under this administrative need, with 60 per cent responding positively to this as a troublesome problem. Next most often checked was "Need methods of identifying opportunities to utilize a wider range of staff in decision-making," with 51.9 per cent positive response. Very closely following was "Need to know how to provide opportunities for staff members to engage in professional/personal development and renewal (knowledge/skills) activities, with 51.1 per cent.

Comment

That "collegiality" was the top-ranked problem area may imply that superintendents view principals and other supervisors as more authoritarian or as imposing greater professional distance between themselves (and their roles) and teachers than is desirable. "Burnout" and dealing with it is a problem less urgent than some of the descriptors in this group, but more than some others. This is of special interest when compared with the views of principals on this same set of descriptors. Principals view "Being able to identify characteristics of and to respond appropriately to burn-out in staff members" as their clearly selected top-ranked problem among this group of descriptors. Sixty per cent selected this problem area, while only 41 per cent selected "collegiality" as a problem, as compared to superintendents' 60 per cent response.

Table VI

The Administrative Need Ranked #6:

"Knowledge of Curriculum/Instruction"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	KNOWLEDGE OF CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTION		
1	Need improvement in coordinating vertical (between grade levels) and horizontal (between subjects in same grade) curriculum/instruction.	97	71.9
2	Need more knowledge and understanding of effective teacher practices	84	62.2
3	Need guidance in establishing a dynamic, functioning curriculum beyond basic textbook approaches.	75	55.6
4	Need more expertise in alternative group strategies	54	40.0
5	Need information on using computers in instruction.	41	30.4
5	Need additional training in selecting developing teaching staff compatible with existing curriculum	41	30.4
7	Need up-date on current provisions for exceptional student.	15	11.1

By a significantly greater number of positive responses, the highest ranked of these descriptors as most troublesome was "Need improvement in coordinating vertical (between grade levels) and horizontal (between subjects in same grade) curriculum/instruction (71.9 per cent). Second most-often identified was "Need more knowledge and understanding of effective teacher practices" with 62.2 per cent. The third ranked of the seven problems of this set was "Need guidance in establishing a dynamic, functioning curriculum beyond basic textbook approaches" (55.6 per cent)

Comment

Curriculum coordination, effective teaching, and a dynamic curriculum are the major problems selected as most troublesome within the general need "Knowledge of curriculum/instruction." Significantly more superintendents chose these problems as compared with others. The emphasis on curricular coordination may point to an area of concern that regional curriculum resource persons (State Department of Education and R.E.S.A.s) could address. Similarly, the next problem area lends itself to rather accessible kinds of in-service education on effective teaching practices. Apparently there is still a demand for workshops on generic teaching skills, a topic that has been the focus of a great many training programs across the state and nation.

The third problem selected, a dynamic curriculum that goes beyond basic textbook approaches, implies a more fundamental and more problematic kind of issue. We infer here that the recent emphases on basic skills and on statewide course and performance standards have been accompanied by the narrowing of curricular and teaching approaches, with more emphasis on memorization and recall of material from a single source. What may be needed is a program of assisting teachers to differentiate between objectives, which may be set from the top-down and be more limited and focused, and teaching delivery systems, which can be richer, more varied, more attuned to individual needs and interests, and can develop more active engagement by the learner, in the topics and skills at issue.

Table VII

The Administrative Need Ranked #7,

"Knowledge/Use of Leadership Techniques"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	KNOWLEDGE/USE OF LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES		
1	Need more information on management techniques (communicating, listening, motivating, praising).	94	69.6
2	Need training and expertise in how to develop an effective leadership team.	69	51.1
3	Leadership staff need practice in involving others in the planning process.	65	48.2
4	Need to increase shared leadership authority and responsibility.	57	42.2
5	Need more training in crisis management.	40	29.6
6	Need practice-training in the decision-making process.	34	25.2
7	Need information on various styles of leadership and their uses.	33	24.4

More than two-thirds of all superintendents identified as a most troublesome problem, "Need more information on management techniques (communicating, listening, motivating, praising), with 69.6 per cent. Second under this need for improved leadership techniques was "Need training and expertise in how to develop on effective leadership team" (51.1 per cent). Third highest among the seven descriptors offered was "Leadership staff need practice in involving others in the planning process," with 48.2 percent positive responses.

Comment

By far the largest number of superintendents selected the problem area (communicating, listening, etc.) that focuses on the interpersonal skills of leaders. The fact that almost 70% selected this problem underscores the implication that these skills are thought to be substantially below desirable levels. It also confirms the inference drawn earlier from responses shown in Table V, above, that superintendents view principals and others in leadership positions as more authoritarian than is desirable.

The other two problem areas selected as most troublesome have to do with sharing leadership, first via team leadership, and second, via the involvement of others in planning processes. Superintendents are saying that educational leaders at all levels have problems with communication and motivation skills, with team leadership, and with opening the planning process to staff.

Table VIII

The Administrative Need Ranked #8, "Long, Short Term Planning"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	LONG, SHORT TERM PLANNING		
1	Formulating, communicating and maintaining a vision for the school.	81	60.0
2	Developing and implementing methods of involving staff in planning and goal setting.	72	53.3
3	Need to know how to better utilize present database (scores, etc.) as a guide to planning.	70	51.9
4	Need guidance in evaluating the progress/success of short and long term planning.	53	39.3
4	Conducting needs assessment and using results.	53	39.3
6	Need information on characteristics of effective schools.	47	34.8
7	Need an understanding of educational and/or societal trends.	17	12.6

With somewhat less unanimity of response (60 per cent) than for other top-ranked problems, superintendents identified as the most troublesome, "Formulating, communicating, and maintaining a vision for the school". Next most often noted was "Developing and implementing

methods of involving staff in planning and goal-setting" (53.3 per cent). Third of the seven descriptors in per cent of positive response (51.9 per cent) was "Need to know how to better utilize present database (scores, etc.) as a guide to planning.

Comment

"Vision," the concept that embraces the idea or image of direction for an institution's future, is a somewhat recent addition to the school leader's lexicon. That it should express the single greatest concern within this general domain ("Long, short term planning") is of special interest. Helping superintendents improve their performance in leading their principals to develop, communicate and maintain a vision for the schools will mean going to the core of the superintendents role, that of goal-setting and strategic planning. Superintendents have shown in earlier surveys rather less interest in this than they have with shorter-term management problems.

I find it encouraging that superintendents selected staff involvement in goal-setting and use of data in planning as their 2nd and 3rd most frequently identified problems. Both are consistent with current leadership theory and show movement away from an older conceptualization of leadership which emphasized more self-centered and intuitive ("seat-of-the pants") values.

Table IX

Administrative Need Ranked #9:

"Interpersonal Relations, Rapport"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as " Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	INTERPERSONAL RELATION, RAPPORT		
1	Improving skills in motivating/stimulating staff members.	105	77.8
2	Need to be aware of techniques for assisting staff to accept and practice new ideas and change.	69	51.1
3	Need to know how to deal with difficult people.	58	43.0
4	Need improvement in communication skills (verbal and written).	48	35.6
5	Becoming more accessible to school staff and community.	46	34.1
6	Need training in group dynamics.	42	31.1
7	How to reconcile conflicting roles of boss and good friend when dealing with staff.	30	22.2

Of all seventy of the problem areas offered within the survey instrument, "Improving skills in motivating/stimulating staff members" was the most frequently identified. This descriptor attracted a positive response from 77.8 per cent of all superintendents responding to the survey. Approximately half of all superintendents (51.1 per cent) identified "Need to be aware of techniques for assisting staff to accept and practice new ideas and change." Third most often identified among the seven descriptors associated with this need was "Need to know how to deal with difficult people", with 43.0 per cent noting it as a troublesome problem.

Comment

Skills in motivating and stimulating staff, with almost 4 out of 5 identifying it as most troublesome, is a problem that stands apart, and as worthy of special attention as revealed by this finding. Apparently superintendents are experiencing a significant level of apathy and resistance to improvement efforts. Also, one wonders if superintendents conceive of motivation as an external force, something that "you do to staff" or as an internal force, something that happens when the environment invites growth and change. The comparative frequency of selection of some other descriptors sheds light on this issue. (See "ranking from 1-70", Table XIV).

In tandem with motivating and stimulating staff was the problem of better assisting staff to accept change. Here then are two major problems, placed high on this priority list, telling us of skills needed now in this period of reform and change.

Table X

Administrative Need Ranked #10:

"School-Parent Communication"

Rank	Descriptors	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
	SCHOOL-PARENT COMMUNICATION		
1	Increasing parent support of education programs.	84	62.2
2	Need to devise a system for communication flow from central office or school to parents.	69	51.1
3	More effective methods of communicating with parents about student concerns (pregnancy, drugs, etc.).	68	50.4
4	Need ways to get more feedback from parents.	56	41.5
5	How to keep the channels of communications open among those who disagree.	54	40.0
6	Need guidelines for setting up and conducting effective parent conferences.	47	34.8
7	Need improvement in strengthening formal groups (PTA, Booster Clubs, etc.).	24	17.9

"Increasing parental support for educational programs" is the problem area most frequently identified under this administrative need, with 62.2 per cent positively responding. Second, most often identified among these seven descriptors is "Need to devise systems for communication flow from central office or school to parents. Approximately one in two superintendents (51.1 per cent) identified this problem., as they did for the third most frequently cited, "More effective methods of communicating with parents about student concerns (pregnancy, drugs, etc.)," with 50.4 per cent.

Comment

Superintendents are looking for new and better ways to communicate with parents, as evidenced by their high level of concern for the problem of better school-parent communication, and their relative degree of satisfaction with (or indifference to) two of the main channels for reaching parents, parent-teacher conferences and PTA's, booster clubs, etc. Another possible explanation for these responses is that what needs to be communicated (soliciting support, dealing with drugs, pregnancy, etc.) requires new and different channels than the traditional ones. Systematic communication from both central office and school, a commonly encountered characteristic of many school systems, is still a need in one out of two districts in Georgia.

The Ten Problem Areas Most Often Identified by Superintendents

Seventy problem areas were presented by the survey instrument, seven for each of the general administrative needs that were the ten highest as ranked by superintendents in 1987. A rank-ordered list of these seventy problem areas, from the one most often selected to the one least often selected, is shown as Table XIV, and appears later in this report.

From that list of seventy, we show below those most often cited as "most troublesome".

Table XI

The Problem Areas Most Frequently Identified by Superintendents

Rank	Problem Area	No. of Superintendents Identifying As "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
1	Improving skills in motivating/stimulating staff members.	105	77.8
2	Need additional skills in dealing with improvements of marginal staff members (teachers, principals, etc.)	100	74.1
3	Need improvement in coordinating vertical (between grade levels) and horizontal (between subjects in same grade) curriculum/instruction.	97	71.9
4	Need training and practice in using mandated evaluation forms.	96	71.1
4	Need training in conferencing skills, observation skills, and formulation of improvement or growth plans for staff.	96	71.1
6	Need more information on management techniques (communicating, listening, motivating, praising.)	94	69.6
7	Focusing supervision upon the teaching-learning situation rather than upon the teacher.	91	67.4
8	Need more knowledge and understanding of effective teacher practices.	84	62.2
8	Increasing parent support of educational programs.	84	62.2
10	How to foster faculty collegiality.	81	60.0
10	Formulating, communicating and maintaining a vision for the school.	81	60.0

The Ten Problem Areas LEAST Often Identified by Superintendents

A study of the problem areas that were cited least often can be instructive. They can be compared with the list of those problems most often selected and can also inform us as to what superintendents might not be much interested in, as staff development topics.

Table XII

The Problem Areas Least Often Cited as Troublesome

Problem Area	No. of Superintendents Identifying As "Most Troublesome"	Percent of Superintendents
Need more training in special education instruction.	13	9.6
Need up-date on current provisions for exceptional students.	15	11.1
Need training in Quality Circle approach to problem solving.	16	11.9
Planning for use of teachers and/or administrators in peer supervision.	16	11.9
Need an understanding of educational or social trends.	17	12.6
Developing a comprehensive and ongoing orientation program for new teachers/administrators.	20	14.8
Need improvement in strengthening formal groups (PTA, Booster Clubs, etc.)	24	17.8
Need to evaluate change to determine the success of the change.	24	17.8
Need to develop and learn uses of a management team for supervision.	27	20.0
How to reconcile conflicting jobs of boss and good friend when dealing with staff.	30	22.2
Need information on various styles of leadership and their uses.	33	24.4
Need system for assessing instructional needs.	33	24.4
Need information on classroom management.	33	24.4

Table XIII

Comparing Most Often and Least Often Cited Problem Areas

(using abbreviated forms of problem areas)

Most often Cited	Percent	Least Often Cited	Percent
Motivating/stimulating staff	77.8	Special Education	9.6
Marginal staff	74.1	Exceptional Students	11.1
Vertical/horizontal coordination	71.9	Quality Circles	11.9
Mandated evaluations	71.1	Peer Supervision	11.9
Conferencing/Observing/Planning	71.1	Education/Social Trends	12.6
Communicating/Listing/Motivating/ Praising	69.6	Orientation Programs	14.8
Focused Supervision	67.4	PTA's Bosters	17.8
Effective Teaching	62.2	Evaluating change	17.8
Parent Support	62.	Management Team Supervision	20.0
Collegiality	60.0	Conflicting Roles	22.2
Vision	60.0	Leadership Styles	24.4
		Assessing Instructional Needs	24.4
		Classroom Management	24.4

Summary and Conclusion

Georgia's superintendents, having assessed their most critical administrative needs through earlier surveys, identified their districts' most troublesome specific problems associated with those critical needs. For each critical need, rankings of seven problem areas were determined. Following each of these ten tables commentary on the three highest-ranked problems is offered. Of the ten most often cited problems among the seventy of the survey, five related to working with teachers to improve instruction. Five others related to developing the climate and organization of the schools and school districts. These are compared with the ten problems least often identified as "most troublesome." All seventy problem areas of the survey are ranked from most to least often as identified by the 73 per cent of Georgia's superintendents who responded to the survey.

What emerges from the study is a prioritized agenda of the more serious, specific concerns of school administrators in Georgia. Those who seek to know these concerns have been provided with, through the sponsorship of this study by the Georgia Educational Leadership Academy, information that can inform their understanding of and decisions about educational leadership at the local level. Most directly, the Georgia Educational Leadership Academy has gained new data as input to decisions about its program for the staff development of educational leaders in Georgia.

Acknowledgements

The writer wishes to acknowledge the valued assistance of several colleagues at Georgia Southern College: Dr. Steve Lang for research consultation; Ms. Mary Mazerik for handling all data processing; and Ms. Shelby Howell for coordinating the many details of survey mailings and publications; and Ms. Donna Colson and Ms. Beth Parrish for word processing.

Table XIV

Problem Areas Ranked from Most Often to Least Often Identified by Superintendents

Rank	Problems Areas	No. of Superintendents Identifying as "Most Troublesome"	Per cent of Superintendents
1	Improving skills in motivating/ stimulating staff members	105	77.78
2	Need additional skills in dealing with improvements of marginal staff member (teachers, principals, etc.)	100	74.07
3	Need improvement in coordinating vertical (between grade levels) and horizontal (between subjects in same grade) curriculum/instruction.	97	71.85
4	Need training and practice in using mandated evaluation forms.	96	71.11
4	Need training in conferencing skills, observation skills, and formulation of improvement or growth plans for staff.	96	71.11
6	Need more information on management techniques (communicating, listening, motivating, praising).	94	69.63
7	Focusing supervision upon the teaching-learning situation rather than upon the teacher.	91	67.41
8	Need more knowledge and understanding of effective teacher practices.	84	62.22
8	Increasing parent support of educational programs.	84	62.22
10	How to foster faculty collegeality.	81	60.00
10	Formulating, communicating and maintaining a vision for the school.	81	60.00
12	Need for administrators to improve skills in prioritizing instructional needs.	80	59.26

Table XIV (cont'd)

12	Need for additional training in needs analysis, developing clearly defined goals, and methods for achieving these goals.	80	59.26
14	Need knowledge and approaches to organizing staff development to improve instruction.	77	57.04
15	Need defined criteria for use in identifying school effectiveness and/or program effectiveness.	75	55.56
15	Need guidance in establishing a dynamic, functioning curriculum beyond basic textbook approaches.	75	55.56
17	Developing and implementing methods of involving staff in planning and goal setting.	72	53.33
18	Need assistance in developing skills to manage change; i.e. diminished productivity, heightened anxiety, dissent, etc.	70	51.85
18	Needs methods of identifying opportunities to utilize a wider range of staff in decision-making.	70	51.85
18	Need to know how to better utilize present database (scores, etc.) as a guide to planning.	70	51.85
21	Need to be aware of techniques for assisting staff to accept and practice new ideas and change.	69	51.11
21	Need to know how to provide opportunities for staff members to engage in professional/personal development and renewal (knowledge, skills) activities.	69	51.11
21	Need training and expertise in how to develop an effective leadership team.	69	51.11
21	Need to devise a system for communication flow from central office or school to parents.	69	51.11
25	How to establish a climate for staff participation in planning instructional improvement.	68	50.37
25	More effective methods of communicating with parents about student concerns (pregnancy, drugs, etc.).	68	50.37

Table XIV (cont'd)

27	Need to know and recognize several approaches to learning and techniques for motivating pupils.	65	48.15
27	Need improvement in various ways of providing feedback to staff.	65	48.15
27	Leadership staff need practice in involving others in the planning process.	65	48.15
30	Defining the principals's role as instructional leader.	64	47.41
30	Need additional training in strategies for managing instruction while still allowing for appropriate individual freedom of teachers in classroom instruction.	64	47.41
32	Need to develop plan for a utilization of the total staff in instructional supervisory behavior.	63	46.67
33	Increasing staff awareness of goals and their commitment to achieving these goals.	59	43.70
34	Need to know how to deal with difficult people.	58	42.96
35	Need to increase shared leadership authority and responsibility.	57	42.22
36	Need ways to get more feedback from parents.	56	41.48
37	Need more expertise in alternative group strategies.	54	40.00
37	How to keep the channels of communication open among those who disagree.	54	40.00
39	Need guidance in evaluating the process/ success of short and long term planning.	53	39.26
39	Conducting needs assessment and using results.	53	39.26
41	Need additional training in strategies for managing instruction.	52	38.52
42	How to coordinate the instructional program across grade levels and content areas.	51	37.78
42	Be able to identify characteristics of and to respond appropriately to burnout in staff members.	51	37.78

Table XIV (cont'd)

44	Need workshops in the management of small groups; i.e. discussion, disagreement, task allocation, consensus.	50	37.04
45	Developing yearly goals and work plans for various staff positions.	49	36.30
45	Need to correlate curriculum guides, textbooks, and learning materials when implementing change.	49	36.30
47	Need improvement in communication skills (verbal and written).	48	35.56
48	Need information on characteristics of effective schools.	47	34.81
48	Need guideline for setting up and conducting effective parent conferences.	47	34.81
50	Becoming more accessible to school staff and community.	46	34.07
51	Making more effective use of newer methods, newer media, and new departures in instruction.	44	32.59
52	Need to know how to develop and manage an adequate information system to determine the effectiveness of a program.	43	31.85
53	Need training in group dynamics.	42	31.11
54	Need additional training in selecting developing teaching staff compatible with existing curriculum.	41	30.37
54	Need information on using computers in instruction.	41	30.37
56	Need more training in crisis management.	40	29.63
57	Need practice-training in the decision making process.	34	.25.19
58	Need information on classroom management.	33	24.44
58	Need system for assessing instructional needs.	33	24.44
58	Need information on various styles of leadership and their uses.	33	24.44
61	How to reconcile conflicting roles of boss and good friend when dealing with staff.	30	22.22

Table XIV (cont'd)

62	Need to develop and learn uses of a management team for supervision.	27	20.00
63	Need to evaluate change to determine the success of the change.	24	17.78
63	Need improvement in strengthening formal groups (PTA, Booster Clubs, etc.).	24	17.78
65	Developing a comprehensive and on-going orientation program for new teachers/ administrators.	20	14.81
66	Need an understanding of educational and/or societal trends.	17	12.59
67	Planning for use of teachers and/or administrators in peer supervision.	16	11.85
67	Need training in the Quality Circle approach to problem solving.	16	11.85
69	Need up-date on current provisions for exceptional students.	15	11.11
70	Need more training in special education instruction.	13	9.63